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Sportsmen and Small Boats, 1979

SPORTSMEN AND SMALL BOATS

DIV. OF RECREATIONAL
SAFETY & REGISTRATION
—SAFETY SECTION—

Each year many sportsmen die from *Hypothermia* or *drowning* in Maine's lakes, rivers and streams.

Most of these fatalities occur in early Spring or late Fall when fishing and hunting activities are at their peak and the water is very cold. A great majority of these accidents result from capsizing or falling out of small boats or canoes.

The risk of capsizing or falling from a small boat or canoe is extremely high in cold rough water and the chances *of survival are very low.*

COLD WATER KILLS—KNOW IT—BELIEVE IT—even persons who are in excellent physical condition and know how to swim. Venturing out on large bodies of water in the spring and fall when the water is very cold is simply asking for trouble unless you use good common sense. Stay near the shore and if the wind picks up get off as soon as possible.

We hope you will take this advice to heart. In 1978 we lost 14 sportsmen and we do not want you to become a statistic.

REMEMBER—A life preserver or a cushion is no good if you can't reach it in an emergency. On rough water, on fast moving rivers and streams, and on **cold** water, a life preserver should be WORN.

HYPOTHERMIA—WHAT IS IT, AND HOW DOES IT KILL?

Hypothermia is subnormal temperature within the central body. When a person is immersed in cold water, the skin and nearby tissues may cool very fast. However, it may take 10 to 15 minutes before the temperature of the heart and brain starts to drop. When the core temperature reaches 90° F., unconsciousness may occur. When the core temperature drops to 85° F., heart failure is the usual cause of death. However, a person in cold water may drown because he loses the use of his arms and legs and his consciousness becomes clouded.

WHAT DO I DO IF AN ACCIDENT DOES HAPPEN?

In case of accidental immersion in cold water, remember that water conducts heat many times faster than air. Most boats will float even when capsized or swamped. Therefore, get in or on the boat to get as far out of the water as possible. Wearing a PFD is a MUST. It will keep you afloat even if you are unconscious. Remaining still and assuming a fetal (Heat Escape Lessening Posture, HELP) posture will increase survival time. About 50% of the heat is lost from the head. It is therefore important to keep the head out of the water. Stay with the boat. Even a capsized boat is easier to see than a person in the water. This will make it easier for rescuers to spot you. If there are several people in the water, huddling close, side to side in a circle, will help preserve body heat.

SHOULD I SWIM FOR SHORE?

This is a most difficult decision. It depends on many things. Some good swimmers have been able to swim 8/10 of a mile in 50° F. water before being overcome by hypothermia. Others have not been able to swim 100 yards. Furthermore, distances on the water are very deceptive. Therefore, DO NOT SWIM unless there is absolutely no chance of rescue and you are absolutely certain you can make it. If you do swim, use a PFD or some other flotation aid.

KNOW THE DANGERS OF COLD WATER

COLD WATER KILLS!

Cold water is a leading killer of hunters and fishermen. Many "drowning" victims *do not drown at all*—they die from cold. Most sportsmen know the dangers of exposure and dress warmly for the weather. **In cold water, the body loses vital heat 30 times faster than in the air.**

Life expectancy in 33-40 degree water can be reduced to 15 minutes when wearing life preserver—even less without.

It is almost impossible to put a life jacket on in the water when hit with sudden cold shock. **Life jackets should be worn when boating on cold water.**

SURVIVAL TIME CAN BE LESS THAN 15 MINUTES IN 33°-40° WATER